The drawings also stand objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.84(p)(4). This objection is also respectfully traversed inasmuch as reference characters "10" and "12 and 14" properly indicate their respective projections. In particular, reference numbers 12 and 14 indicate the "first and second sets of projections." Moreover, these sets of projections are a subset of the "projections" that are indicated by reference number 10. Although the Office Action points to page 4, line 23 and page 5, line 1 as being allegedly inconsistent, Applicants respectfully assert that page 4 correctly refers to "projections 10," and that page 5 properly refers to "first and second projections 12,14." Further, it is respectfully asserted that these reference numerals are used consistently throughout the specification and in the drawings. For these reasons, it is respectfully requested that this objection to the drawings also be withdrawn.

Claims 1–14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, are indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention that is regarded as the invention. It is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art would understand that antecedent support for the recitation of "the first member" is provided by "a first one of the male and female members," as currently recited in each of claims 1, 11, and 12. Further, antecedent support for the recitation of "the second member" is provided by "a second one of the male and female members," as currently recited in each of claims 1, 11, and 12. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that these rejections are in error and that these rejections should be withdrawn.

Claims 1–14 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,019,521 to Manning et al. (Manning) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,196,869 to Kay et al. (Kay). These rejections are respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Independent claims 1 and 11 recite combinations of features that each include "a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to a first one of the male and female members, and each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member." Claim 1 further recites that the second end of the first member cooperatively engages a groove of a second member "such that the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member." Claim 11 further recites that the second end is resiliently movable with respect to the first member "to absorb relative vibration between the male and female members." Similarly, independent claim 12 recites a combination of features including "providing a first one of the male and female members with a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and

each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to the first member. and each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member" such that "the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member" and "relative vibration between the first and second members is absorbed." Support for these combinations of feature are found in Applicants' specification at page 5, lines 7-12 and lines 28-29, at page 6, lines 3-5, and in Applicants Figure 3. Thus, the resilient movement of the second ends provides self-centering and vibration reduction as discussed at page 6, lines 16-22, of Applicants' specification.

In contrast to the Applicants' claimed combinations of features, Manning discloses a connector that "includes a latch 20 which extends from a first end 80 to an opposite, second end 82" (emphasis added; column 8, lines 55-56, etc.). Moreover, Manning's ends 80,82 are either "connected to the housing 22" (column 8, lines 56-57, etc.) or "contacts and 'plays' or slides along the housing 22b" (column 14, lines 58-60, etc.). According to Manning, this arrangement of the ends 80,82 "provides that loose wires and/or optical fibers cannot ride under the latch 20 during engagement or disengagement of the connector 24 with an associated receptacle 26" (column 12, lines 5-8). Further, this is one of the objects of Manning's invention (see column 2, lines 39-43). Thus, Manning explicitly teaches against an end, *per se*, that is resiliently moveable and that provides self-centering and vibration reduction, as recited in Applicants' independent claims 1, 11, and 12.

Manning also teaches that "preferably when the plug housing 22 is fully inserted into the receptacle 26 as shown in FIG. 3B, the latch 20 on the plug housing 22 is essentially in the same state as when the plug housing 22 is disengaged from the receptacle 26 as shown in FIG. 3. In other words, the latch 20 is not deflected when the plug housing 22 is fully inserted into the receptacle 26 as shown in FIG. 3B" (column 11, lines 16-22). Thus, not only does Manning teach away from a resiliently movable end that provides self-centering and vibration reduction, Manning teaches away from self-centering and vibration reduction functions, *per se*.

The Office Action acknowledges that Manning fails to teach or suggest pairs of first and second projections, and alleges that it would have been obvious to provide pairs of first and second projections because this would require a mere duplication of parts. Kay is also cited as allegedly suggesting pairs of resilient latch members. These allegations are also respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Even if there was a suggestion to duplicate Manning's latch 20, a proposition that Applicant does not accept, there is still no teaching or suggestion the claimed invention as a whole. In particular, there is no teaching or suggestion as to how or where a duplicate latch would be positioned relative to the original latch so as to provide self-centering and vibration reduction, as recited in Applicants' independent claims 1, 11, and 12.

With regard to Kay, there is no teaching or suggestion that fastening tabs 32 overcome the deficiencies of Manning. In particular, Kay's describes that the fastening tabs 32 are "for securing the connector to the bracket 12" (column 4, lines 3-5) and that "[t]he connector block 10 is mounted to the support post 24, and is securely seated by the engagement of the fastening tabs 32 of the connector block within the openings 30 of the mounting bracket" (column 7, lines 41-45). Like Manning, there is no teaching or suggestion of a resiliently movable end that provides self-centering and vibration reduction, as recited in Applicants' independent claims 1, 11, and 12.

In conclusion, neither Manning nor Kay, whether considered individually or in combination, teach or suggest Applicants' resiliently movable second ends that provides self-centering and vibration reduction. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of the independent claims be withdrawn and claims 1, 11, and 12 allowed.

Claims 2-10, 13, and 14 dependent from independent claims 1 and 12, and are therefore also allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims, as well as for the additionally recited features that further distinguish over the applied prior art. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of the dependent claims also be withdrawn, and that these claims be allowed.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and timely allowance of the pending claims.

Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative to expedite prosecution of the application.